

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MUNICH 1983

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FOR INR/RSE PAUL COOK

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, UR
SUBJECT: SOME OBERVATIONS ABOUT BREZHNEV'S HEALTH

1. MARK HOPKINS, CHIEF OF VOA' EASTERN EUROPEAN BUREAU IN MUNICH, GAVE CONGEN POLOFF FOLLOWING ACCOUNT OF HI OBSERVATION OF BREZHNEV DURING LATTER'S ARRIVAL IN PARIS JUNE 20. BEGIN ACCOUNT: FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS HAD THE CHANCE TO OBSERVE BREZHNEV FOR ABOUT 25 MINUTES IN A SMALL TERMINAL BUILDING AT ORLY AIRPORT WHEN HE ARRIVED IN PARIS. REPORTERS WERE STATIONED ON A SMALL BALCONY, ABOUT TEN FEET HIGHER THAN FLOOR LEVEL. THE ROOM BELOW -- APPROXIMATELY 50 BY 100 FEET -- WAS LINED WITH SOVIET EMBASSY STAFF IN A HALF MOON, THEIR BACKS TO THE BALCONY. THUS, AS BREZHNEV ENTERED, THEN SHOOK HANDS WITH THE ASSEMBLED GROUP AND THEN MOVED TO THE LEFT END OF THE ROOM WHERE MICROPHONES WERE SET UP FOR BREZHNEV AND GISCARD D'ESTAING, REPORTERS HAD THE CHANCE TO OBSERVE BREZHNEV FROM DISTANCES OF ABOUT 20 TO 50 FEET.

HOPKINS, EQUIPPED WITH BINOCULARS, NOTED: BREZHNEV'S STEP SEEMED HEAVY, ALTHOUGH HE WALKED FIRMLY UPRIGHT. AS HE MOVED IN THE SEMI-CIRCLE SHAKING HANDS, HE SIDE-STEPPED,
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ALMOST A SHUFFLE. HIS HAIR -- AS SEEN THROUGH BINOCULARS AND UNDER TV AND CAMERA LIGHTS -- APPEARED ALMOST ALL GRAY. HIS EYES SEEMED TO WATER. HIS LEFT LIP APPEARED PULLED BACK. HE APPEARED FATIGUED, AND HIS FACIAL SKIN PASTY. HIS TOP LIP SEEMED INVOLUNTARILY TO SUCK OVER HIS LOWER LIP -- IN A SORT OF SMACKING MOTION. HIS LISP AND IMPRECISE PRONOUNCIATION SEEMED AS BAD OR WORSE AS IN PREVIOUS PUBLIC

ADDRESSES. AS GISCARD D'ESTAING GAVE HIS WELCOMING SPEECH, BREZHNEV LOOKED AROUND THE ROOM. AT TIMES HE SEEMED TO HAVE ALMOST A BLANK LOOK, A GAZE, AS IF HE WERE NOT QUITE THERE. UNLIKE EARLIER TIMES, BREZHNEV EXHIBITED FEW FACIAL EXPRESSIONS, NEITHER SMILES NOR ANY OTHER PRONOUNCED EMOTION. END ACCOUNT.

2. HOPKINS ALSO HEAR REPORTS FROM OTHER JOURNALISTS ABOUT BREZHNEV'S BEHAVIOR WHEN LAYING THE TRADITIONAL WREATH AT THE ETERNAL FLAME: BEGIN ACCOUNT: IT WAS REPORTED THAT WHEN BREZHNEV LAID THE TRADITIONAL WREATH AT THE ETERNAL FLAME, HE PUT HIS FINGERS TO HIS TEMPLE AFTER HE STOOPED OVER AND STARTED TO RISE. THIS IS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN SHOWN ON WEST GERMAN TELEVISION, ALTHOUGH HOPKINS DID NOT PERSONALLY SEE IT. THE REPORT SQUARES WITH A NEWSWEEK PHOTOGRAPHIC IN THE JULY 4 INTERNATIONAL EDITION WHICH SHOWS BREZHNEV CLASPING THE TOP SIDES OF HIS HEAD, AND IN THE LEFT SIDE OF THE PICTURE, A HAND REACHING OUT AS IF TO ASSIST HIM. END ACCOUNT.GILMORE

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